Since the last English Department display of publications, numerous scholarly and creative projects have come to fruition. Others will appear shortly. This seemed an appropriate time to highlight these achievements. Hence this extra, a Spring Break Special Issue of the DNB.

Professor G. Douglas Atkins publishes books in bunches. The Department displayed two of his 2010 books last fall, but saved this one for future recognition. Published in September 2010, T. S. Eliot and the Essay brings together two of Atkins’s primary interests. Baylor University Press notes that the book “offers an original consideration of T. S. Eliot’s essay as a form of embodied thinking. A combination of literature and philosophy, the genre of the essay holds within itself a great tension—that between truth and creative prose. And, as Atkins explains, these conflicting forces of truth and creativity exist not only within the literary format itself but also within the writers and their relationships with the genre, making essay writing a wonderfully enriching “impure art.” Exploring the similarities between Eliot’s prose and poetry with the art of essay writing, Atkins discovers remarkably similar patterns of Incarnational thinking that emerge in each. In so doing, he establishes for the first time the essayistic nature of the great poem Four Quartets and provides an eloquent reflection on how the essay in all its impurity functions as Incarnational art, an embodiment of truth.”

In 1978, KU Continuing Education first offered English 332, then a paper course written and taught by Professor Gerhard Zuther and Priscilla McKinney, Ph.D. Now Steve Evans, English full-time lecturer, has taken the Bard electronic with an all-new course that features a full complement of digital resources, study guides for each of the ten works, full treatment of critical trends, and much more. Based on James Shapiro’s recent biography, A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599, the design and production of this new course – with a text of more than 260 pages (exclusive of linked materials) – required careful analysis of the needs of various student populations working in the electronic learning environment.
Associate Professor Iris Smith Fischer’s new book, *Mabou Mines: Making Avant-Garde Theater in the 1970s*, investigates “a theater company whose record of daring innovation spans more than forty years. The group’s founding in 1970 by JoAnne Akalaitis, Lee Breuer, Philip Glass, Ruth Maleczech, and David Warrillow created new theatrical modes by combining the latest concepts in music, visual arts, and technology with traditional forms of creative expression: puppetry, text, movement, theater design.” Michigan University Press copy for this monograph continues: “Like much avant-garde theater of the 1960s and ‘70s, most of their early pieces were never recorded, leaving little documentation of their foundational productions. Iris Smith Fischer provides this missing history, attempting to capture and describe the explorations of a group who set out to create indescribable performance. She makes visible once again the celebrated company’s least documented work, and offers accounts of the decisions and events that defined Mabou Mines’ ideas and methods, particularly their creative collaborations with visual artists, musicians, writers, and dancers.”

Professor Maryemma Graham and Distinguished Professor Jerry Ward, Jr. Dillard University, have combined to edit what Cambridge University Press calls “the first major twenty-first century history of four hundred years of black writing. . . . a comprehensive overview of the literary traditions, oral and print, of African-descended peoples in the United States. Expert contributors, drawn from the United States and beyond, emphasize the dual nature of each text discussed as a work of art created by an individual and as a response to unfolding events in American cultural, political, and social history. Unprecedented in scope, sophistication and accessibility, the volume draws together current scholarship in the field. It also looks ahead to suggest new approaches, new areas of study, and as yet undervalued writers and works. The Cambridge History of African American Literature is a major achievement both as a work of reference and as a compelling narrative and will remain essential reading for scholars and students in years to come.”

Publication of “Misticall Words and Names Infinite”: *An Edition and Study of Humphrey Lock’s Treatise on Alchemy*, by Assistant Professor Peter Grund, is expected by the end of this month. The book is in final production by ACMRS (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies) at Arizona State University as part of their Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies Series. Back cover copy declares: “Adding to the few edited early English texts on alchemy, this book presents an edition of Humphrey Lock’s treatise on the philosophers’ stone, the miraculous substance that would turn base metals into silver and gold or cure diseases. The substantial introduction weaves together struggles between competing merchant factions in Russia, the Elizabethan court’s fascination with alchemy, and the origins and evolution of Lock’s alchemical treatise. The book offers new insights into the circulation of alchemical texts in early modern England, the reuse and adaptation of alchemical literature, and the emergence of English as a language of science.”

The *Gift* that keeps on giving. Professor Emeritus James Gunn’s *Gift from the Stars* has recently been translated into Chinese and published by Liaoning Children’s Publishing House in Shenyang, China. The work was originally published in Analog in six “novelette” installments from 1999-2005. It was then printed as a novel in 2005 by Ben Bella Books (and by Easton Press, in full-leather bound form, as an Easton Signed First Edition of Science Fiction). It remains divided into six parts rather than ten or twelve chapters. Jim states that his novel grew out of his “mixed reaction” to the 1997 film, *Contact*, which was based on the 1985 book by Carl Sagan, who had praised Jim’s earlier novel, *The Listeners*, also a story of “first contact.” In his preface to the novel, Jim writes, “I enjoyed the film and yet I felt that it was romantic rather than realistic. . . . That isn’t the way it would happen, I told myself, and I was “inspired” to write *Gift from the Stars*, a response not only to *Contact* but to every novel of humans encountering the unknown.” One can’t know if alien civilizations will ever read *Gift From the Stars*, but, in its new Chinese translation, it’s accessible to another 1.3 billion earthlings.

Wesleyan University Press calls Associate Professor Joseph Harrington’s *Things Come On* “a broken and sutured hybrid of forms, combining poetry, prose narration, primary documents, dramatic dialogue, and pictures. The narrative is woven around the almost exact concurrence of the Watergate scandal and the dates of the poet’s mother’s illness and death from breast cancer, and weaves together private and public tragedies—showing how the language of illness and of political cover-up powerfully resonate with one another. The resulting “amneoir” (a blend of “memoir” and “amnesia”) explores a time for which the author...
must rely largely on testimony and documentary evidence—not unlike the Congress and the nation did during the same period. Absences, amnesia, and silences count for at least as much as words. As the double tragedy unfolds, it refuses to become part of an overarching system, metaphor, or metanarrative, but rather raises questions of memory and evidence, gender and genre, personal and political, and expert vs. lay language. This haunting experimental biography challenges our assumptions about the distance between individual experience and history.” Professor Harrington’s chapbook, Earth Day Suite, was also published online recently.

Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Culture Susan K. Harris’s God’s Arbiters will be released on 4 May. Those who attended her Hall Center for the Humanities Lecture earlier this semester got a preview of her research. Advance publicity from Oxford University Press describes the book in this way: “Mark Twain called it “pious hypocrisies.” President McKinley called it “civilizing and Christianizing.” Both were referring to the U.S. annexation of the Philippines in 1899. Drawing on documents ranging from Noah Webster’s 1832 History of the United States through Congressional speeches and newspaper articles, and the anti-imperialist writings of Mark Twain, Harris keenly assesses the attitudes of Americans and the moralistic rhetoric that governed national and international debates over America’s global mission at the turn into the twentieth century. She offers a provocative reading both of the debates’ religious framework and of the evolution of Christian national identity within the U.S. She also moves outside U.S. geopolitical boundaries, reviewing responses to the Americans’ venture into global imperialism among Europeans, Latin Americans, and Filipinos.”

Italian publisher Leconte has published a bilingual edition of Associate Professor William J. Harris’s chapbook, Personal Questions (Domande Personali). The work inaugurates Leconte’s new series, Strophic Notebooks. A four-page interview with Professor Harris, in Italian only, begins, “Dove vivi, Billy Joe?” A preview document, prepared by the press, notes that Domande Personali brings the poetry of William J. Harris to Italy for the first time. It continues, “Harris has been called the Miles Davis of poetry. Whether he writes about family, marital love or social warfare, about the past or what interests him in a risky ‘here and now,’ he knows how to combine humor and politics in a tradition that extends from William Carlos Williams and Langston Hughes to Amiri Baraka.”

Spartan Press of Kansas City recently published Mark Hennessy’s poetry collection, I Lost It All the Night the Day the Circus Came to Town. Mark is a Ph.D. student in Creative Writing in the English Department. Spartan specializes in printing works by writers from Kansas and Missouri who “show a likelihood of continuing to publish original work in the future.” The press commits to publishing at least two titles by a selected author (Hennessy’s first collection of poetry, Cue the Bedlam, appeared from another Spartan imprint, UDP, in 2005). The publisher notes that Hennessy’s work “stands out for the very liveliness of his subjects, the narrative arch of the work as a whole, and his ability to make those who encounter his work care about the tales he tells.”

Poetry lecturer Megan Kaminski’s carry catastrophe was a winner of Grey Book Press’s 2010 Chapbook Contest. Since published by that press, the chapbook has been described in this way: “carry catastrophe explores the body’s existence in nature and the made world. It locates the self, if only momentarily, and explores small catastrophes that rupture the “I” from its various narratives.” A new chapbook by Kaminski, Collection, is forthcoming from Dusie Press in Zurich, Switzerland, later this month.

Last fall, Transcendence, a novel by Christopher McKitterick, lecturer and Associate Director of the Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction, was featured in the Department’s faculty publication display. However, we shouldn’t overlook his efforts as editor of the May/June 2010 issue of World Literature Today devoted to “International Science Fiction.” Featuring commentary, reviews, and new work by several SF luminaries, including last year’s Gunn Memorial Lecturer, China Miéville, this special issue highlights the “global conversation” sparked by the work of speculative fiction practitioners around the world.
Professor Geraldo Sousa’s *At Home in Shakespeare’s Tragedies*, a monograph from Ashgate Press, was also featured in our Fall 2010 faculty publication display. We must not forget, though, that he edits a collection of essays comprising some 200 pages every year. *Mediterranean Studies XIX* came off the press in February 2011 featuring ten articles that address “the ideas and ideals of Mediterranean cultures from Late Antiquity to the Enlightenment and their influence beyond these geographical and temporal boundaries.”